

CHALLENGES IN THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN LIBYAN HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of English as an international language has encouraged many countries to introduce English teaching in their Curriculum. It has been successful in nation due to cooperation provided to students and teacher by educational stake holders. In other nations a strong attachment to their native language has been a uphill task. These nations regard introduction of English in their educational curriculum as form o neocolonialism and has faced resistance. Negative attitude and poor motivation on part of students and teachers has hampered any active acceptance of English there. The introduction of a new language in a nation where an effective and established language flourishes requires Herculean motivation and positive attitude from the trainers and students.

KEYWORDS: Attitude, Curriculum, Educational Stake, Foreign

INTRODUCTION

Today English ranks among the most spoken languages in the world. Burnaus (2005) found that many countries that have their own languages, have adopted English as their second language. English is being used as official language in government offices and institutions in these countries. Globalization has set a common language to aid communication (Chum, 2010, Bidin, 2009) though Schools, colleges and institute of higher learning use English invariably, in Africa adoption of English has been low and ineffective.

It is challenging in African nations to adopt English tlhe secong language, due to the native languages deep rooted in the communities. Due to globalization, English has received due, attention across the African continent. Libya is providing the Learning of English as a second language to Arabic. The induction has faced challenges due to low motivation among teachers and students, due to negative attitudes.

During the late 1980s, the teaching of English was banned in Schools and Universities but due to adverse consequences of this policy (Abdullah, 2006) the new curriculum introduced English language teaching in 2000.

Proficiency in second language is not an easy proposition. Wang (2006) found second language learning to be a process full of complex internal and external factors. Vaezi (2008) and Riemann (2001) stated that motivation is the key factor influencing the rate and success of second/foreign language learning. Motivation determines the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 learning (Purdie, 2003).

Both positive and negative attitudes prevail forwards a particular language. Having negative attitude some learners want to learn the second language to prevail over their community but positive attitude strengthen motivation. Pan,

Zang and Wu (2010) say that a successful learner possesses positive attitude towards the target language.

To get in touch with the outside world, there is a growing pressure on academic institutions towards foreign language. It has become a necessity of life to take teaching of English language in Libya (Al-Ansari, 1993). In Libya, English is taught as a foreign language in post-secondary and higher education in School, Colleges and Universities. (Yihogn, Yuan and Ying, 2007). Problems have been faced by learners in acquiring EFL, and language teachers/scholars have held learning materials, teaching methods, and other related issues responsible for this situation.

The Ministry of education in Libya advocates English at lower education levels whereas the Ministry of Higher Education is keen on English language teaching in colleges and universities. Both ministries are responsible for text books and teaching material in which for language skill are taught. Teaching English language in Libya entails use of the language to communicate effectively with the outside world for better knowledge, economy and social development (Douglas, 2003).

MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE IN LEARNING ENGLISH IN LIBYA

After the American air raid in 1986, the Libyan higher education faced serious crisis, with the decision to stop teaching English and French language in all educational sectors. For 10 years, English was phased out of school and university levels. English was reintroduced at school and university level. English is compulsory subject in all private and public schools. The Libyan high school students face problem due to existing reading materials, economic environment, teaching methods and techniques', an Arabic-speaking environment and the unfamiliar linguistic (Harden, 2006).

The low proficiency in English among students is due to motivation towards the language and the other being attitude towards English as a second language.

Gardner (1991) finds attitudes as components of motivation in language learning and Irene (2010) asserts that "attitudes are necessary but insufficient indirect condition for linguistic attainment. When paired up with motivation, attitudinal tendencies relate to the level of student engagement in language learning and to attainment.

The major viable is attitude, which Khan (2007) says in complex, and many definitions have been put forward describing its essence (P.78)' Mohideen (2005) writes' attitude in the concept that has probably played the control role in development of social psychology during the 20th Century (P.25).

Bidin (2009) defines attitude, as a mental or neutral state or readiness, shaped through experience or dynamic influence on the response provided by and individual to situation and object. Kim and Merriam (2004) define an attitude as the general feeling (positive to negative) or evaluation (good/bad) a person has towards self, other people, objects or event, Lopez (2007) refers to 'attitudes' as sets of beliefs possessed by learners about factors as the target language culture and the learner's own culture. Lopez (2007) further stipulated that attitudes are not subject to inheritance because they are internalized predispositions.

Chalak and Kassaian (2010) hold that "teacher, learners and researchers agree that a high motivation and a positive attitude towards a second language and its community help second language learning". Studies language attempted to confirm that attitude is factor in second language learning besides intelligence, aptitude, personality, motivation and age (Li, 2007). These is a possibility of coexistence of multiple attitude towards one thing.

Positive attitude towards a community promote other positive attitude towards the language of that same community (Weiyum, 2006). In the study of pupil's attitudes towards language and culture, Wright (1999) used a Likert type questionnaire to scrutinize the attitude of a large sample consisting of 898 pupils in the UK from both Grammar and Secondary Schools. She focused on the pupil's attitudes towards French culture and found that student's attitudes were influenced by several factors as gender, inside and outside School factors (i.e. teachers, textbook, class activation) school type attended, and international experience in which students visit the country where the target language is spoken. According to her, gender is a significant predictor of student's attitudes which is coupled with that of teachers, textbooks, tapes and teaching assistants.

Libya, where English was introduced as a foreign language faced stiff resistance. An Islamic nation, here Arabic is the most used language in all sectors and services. Where Arabic is the official language, English was adopted as a second language. In 1980s the introduction of learning English Grammar and comprehension (Irene, 2010) seemed progressive until late 1980s, when Libya-West rift prompted banning of English in Libya Schools. Reintroduced in 2000, the new English curriculum sought to align Libya with the rest of the world as the global trend of the 21st Century. American and other super powers have targeted Muslim.

Countries as potential threats of world peace forced Libya to have lowest motivation in adopting anything of the western origin. Parents, teachers and education stake holders are partly responsible for not motivating students to accept as a second language, to open up to the world. Motivation is the main determinant of a foreign or second language learning achievement (Jameson, 2007).

Krashen's (1981) monitor model postulates that attitudes and motivation play a largely filtering role in influencing the extent to which second language material is satisfactorily input. Krashen (1981) proposed that language aptitude relates more to conscious language learning attitudes. Studies reveal two types of motivation-instrumental versus integrative. Human motivation is, the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it and the effort expended on it (Dornyei, Csizer and Nemeth 2006).

Gardner (1985) defines motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". He identified two distinct orientations for learning a language. Integrative and instrumental.

Integrative orientation refers to learning more about cultural community of the target language or to assimilate to some degree with the target community. A learner, interactively motivated learns a language in order to "Know more of the culture and values of the foreign language group----- to conduct with speakers of the language to live in the country concerned" (Wilkins 1972 P 184). Gardner (1983 P. 203) defines "learning a language to identify with or become integrated into the society" of the target language.

Vaezi (2008) studied 79-non English major students from the Islamic republic of Iran (IRI) chosen to complete a questionnaire reflecting their motivation for English.

To determine two kinds of motivation, he employed a modified 25-item survey for under graduate students in a university in eastern Iran. It shows high motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English.

Instrumental orientation is more utilitarian, referring to desires to learn the language in order to accomplish some non-interpersonal purpose, such as to pass an Exam or to advance a career. Gardner (1983, P 203) defines it as the

“learning a language become of someone or less clearly perceived utility it might have for the learner”. It aims at, “passing an Examination, to use in one’s job, use it in holiday in the educational system require it (Wilkins 1972, P 184). Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) suggested on individual’s motivation to learn L2 is retrained by both attitude toward the L2 community and the goals, or orientation sought through the acquisition of L2. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) and Gardner and Tremblay (1994) found four other motivational orientation: a) reason for learning. B) desired to attain the learning goal. c) Positive attitude toward learning situation and. D) Effortful behavior. Oxford and Shearin (1994) analyzed a total 12 motivational theories or models, including there from psychology, cognitive development and socio-cultural psychology, land identified 6 factors affecting motivation: attitudes, beliefs about self, goals, involvement, environmental support and personal attributes.”

The attitude of students in learning English on L2 and foreign language in Libya is encouraging but the rest of the lot rely on Arabic for livelihood and employment.

Globalization and new technological application favour Libyan students in learning English.

CONCLUSIONS

Motivation towards learning a particular foreign language as well as the attitudes of the students and the education stake-holders are among the key influential factors in the success of introducing a second language in any organization (Reimann 2001).

Few researches have been done to investigate Libyan students motivation and attitude towards learning English as a second language in High School. It would be useful for Libyan teachers to develop techniques to their way of teaching in order to improve their students English learning ability. This study would also help Libyan teachers to understand better their student’s Motivation and attitude and to find an appropriate way of teaching English. The latter part of this study will focus on the summary, discussion and conclusion of the current study.

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